

Mr. REID. Through the Chair, to my distinguished friend, at 9:45 or thereabouts, we are supposed to talk on the mad cow resolution before the Senate. We have no morning business, as I understand it. I am not going to be here, but I would have a standing objection to any morning business. We have had very few amendments completed on the bankruptcy matter. Maybe the time on morning business could be yielded off the resolution in opposition to that.

It is my understanding the Senator from Iowa is here to speak in morning business.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Five minutes on the beef resolution because I have to go to a committee meeting.

Mr. REID. Fine. I want to make sure we do not get into extended time on morning business because we do not have time.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I understand the Senator from Iowa will speak on the resolution. For scheduling purposes, he will make that statement even if it is before 9:45. Otherwise, as we have discussed, we will proceed after my leader statement to Senator GRASSLEY and then on to the resolution.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, this morning following the leader time we will proceed to consideration of Senate Joint Resolution 4, which is a disapproval resolution relating to a Department of Agriculture rule regarding Canadian cattle. The agreement reached last night provides for up to 3 hours of debate on the resolution prior to a vote. We hope to be able to yield back some of that debate time and vote earlier so we can resume consideration of the bankruptcy bill for further progress.

Last night's order also allows for two more stacked votes on bankruptcy-related amendments; therefore, we will have three votes today, sometime around noon, depending on the amount of time consumed for the disapproval resolution. In other words, we hope as much of that can be yielded back as possible after debate on the resolution.

Once those votes are completed, I expect the Senate will stay on the bankruptcy bill through the day and possibly into the evening. We will continue to have votes this afternoon and into the evening as necessary to move toward passage of this bill. We have made great progress on the bill thus far. We had five amendments yesterday. We look forward to many amendments today so we can bring this very soon to a resolution. By the end of today, I hope we will have some indication as to when we can complete the bankruptcy legislation.

Members should plan their day today around what will be a very busy session today in that although we will be in session in all likelihood tomorrow, we will not be having rollcall votes tomorrow. We have a lot of work to do.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I have a brief statement on an issue that is receiving a lot of attention, a lot of work, and a lot of engagement, both in the Senate and the House of Representatives, by the President of the United States and, indeed, all across America. It is on Social Security.

When the 109th Congress convened, I stated that our mission in this Congress over the next 2 years would be to govern with meaningful solutions. Working together, both sides of the aisle, we made a fast start, very effective start, confirming the President's Cabinet and enacting, 2 weeks ago, class action legislation. We are making good progress on the bankruptcy legislation, as I just mentioned, and very soon we will be turning our attention to writing the Government's spending blueprint for the coming year; that is, governing with meaningful solutions.

Congress, at the same time that activity is going on in the Chamber, is tackling many problems and will be tackling these problems in the weeks and months ahead, including Social Security, which we are engaged on in this body every day, whether it is working in our own caucuses or conference or in committees.

Social Security, a critically important, great program which does serve as the cornerstone of support for senior citizens, now faces challenges that threaten its long-term stability and well-being. The facts are there. The facts are crystal clear. They are grounded in demographics that were defined two generations ago. Those demographics cannot be changed.

What the facts lead to is that in 3 years, the baby boomers arrive on the Social Security rolls. That will begin an almost 30-year period where we will have a doubling of the number of seniors compared to what it is today—up to 77 million Americans who will begin to collect those Social Security benefits.

Second, we all know we have fewer and fewer workers paying into the system, also driven by demographics. Forty years ago we had 16 people paying in for every retiree. Today we have three people paying in for every retiree. In 20 or 30 years, we will only have two paying into the system. Those facts cannot be changed.

With this President, this Congress, the 109th Congress, is facing this challenge. The challenge is to fix Social Security for seniors and for near-retirees and for that next generation. We need to do it, and we will do it this year—this year—and not next year. We are working toward that goal.

In just the past 2 months, the majority has worked aggressively and thoroughly to fully understand the nature of the problem. We have worked hard to begin to engage the American people in a dialog about the program. In town meetings all across the country, we have put some of the best minds at work to create solutions. That activity is underway.

We talked about this repeatedly in our own conferences. We have interacted with administration officials. We have interacted with leading experts on the Social Security system. Our Members are hard at work to fix the underlying problems. That is the heart of the challenge in this 70-year-old program we will address this year.

So far, I report to the Senate and my colleagues that together with the President we agree that retirees and near-retirees who entered the system before the scope of this problem became so large will not see benefit changes. The retirees or near-retirees will see no benefit changes.

Second, together with the President, we agree that we must harness the power of the market and give younger Americans the choice—it is voluntary—to give them the choice of personal retirement accounts whose rate of growth—therefore, we know, ultimately, the rate of benefits—will grow faster than traditional Social Security.

Third, together, with the President, we agree that all ideas should be on the table. It is too early for people to be drawing rigid lines in the sand. Thus, we encourage people to continue the discussion, the debate, the understanding of the issue, and the nature of the problem.

Fourth, together, with the President, we agree that we should act this year and not put it off to the future.

For those who insist there is no problem, I simply say, look at the facts. As people increasingly look at the facts—and we are seeing the response around the country—people see the problem is real, that it is significant, and that it is growing.

For those who say we do not need any action, well, if you have a problem that is growing, it is much easier to act now, to take some medicine to cure the problem, than to have some radical surgery in the future.

We need to test the ideas with regard to the scope of the problem and the ideas for solutions in that crucible of public debate. We need to put them to a vote. We must let the people ultimately judge.

I say all this so people will know that our majority is hard at work, every day, on this vital issue. In consultation with the administration and the House of Representatives, we will continue to bring before the Senate meaningful solutions that will make a difference in the lives of our seniors. The assurances of Social Security should be guaranteed. To be able to guarantee those assurances, we must diagnose the problem, and then we must act. We must govern with meaningful solutions, and that is exactly what this Congress will do.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Does the Senator from Iowa seek recognition?

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, with the permission of the Senator from Georgia, I yield myself 5 minutes.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. No objection.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is recognized for 5 minutes.

JOINT RESOLUTION ON DISAPPROVAL

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the resolution that comes before us disapproving the actions of the Department of Agriculture on the importation of Canadian beef into the United States. But in doing so, I do not denigrate the efforts that are being made to have a debate on a legitimate public policy issue, but to put it in context.

First, from the standpoint of my chairmanship of the Senate Finance Committee with jurisdiction over international trade, I think this is something for which we have developed policies over the last couple decades, where we have worked very hard to see that several rights can be preserved.

One, probably basic to this debate, is obviously the sovereign right of any country to make sure that it does not in any way allow products into the country that would in any way hurt the health and safety of the consumers of that particular country. I think every trade agreement takes that into consideration.

Within the last 10 or 15 years, we have worked very hard and have included in our trade agreements rules concerning sanitary and phytosanitary measures. These rules require that science, as opposed to political science, be the basis upon which we base decisions as to whether a product is safe to enter the U.S. market.

So I hope during this debate that we keep in mind that we do have commitments to rely on science when making determinations as to whether products are safe. Hopefully, each country respects that. Particularly the United States, being a leader in the rule of law in international trade, ought to do that. But we expect every country that comes under the WTO to do exactly the same, and the same holds with other trade agreements. We also, of course, reserve the right to make sure our food is safe.

For the debate we are in now, I hope we remember that if it had not been for mad cow disease in Canada, there would never be any such discussion before the Senate because over a long period of time we had imports of beef from Canada, and we have been exporting our red meat and other food products to Canada. So if we had not had mad cow disease in Canada, then we would not be debating this issue.

So when it gets to the issue of whether mad cow disease is an issue with Canadian beef coming into the country, then let's remember that decision ought to be made strictly on the sound science of whether that meat is safe. If we are going to make a political decision in place of a scientific decision as to whether Canadian beef should come into the country, then, of course, our

purity in international trade is going to be questioned by other countries.

The second point is that, during this very same period of time when we have been having this problem with Canada as to whether their meat is safe to come into the country, we have also been trying to negotiate with the Japanese because we had one mad cow case and the Japanese and other countries are not taking our beef. We have been working over the last several months to get Japan to take our beef based upon the principle that we are following the sanitary and phytosanitary rules, on a scientific basis, for making sure our meat is safe for the Japanese consumers. We do not want to get ourselves into a position where we are going to ignore the science of the safety of meat in Canada versus—

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. MURKOWSKI). The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I will finish one sentence, if I could.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. I am happy to yield the Senator an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. GRASSLEY. We do not want to get ourselves in a position of having the Japanese say to us our meat is not safe even though it is shown to be safe based on sound science. Since we want our beef to go to Japan because it is safe, then, obviously, if meat is safe coming in from Canada, it has to be received as well.

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL OF THE RULE SUBMITTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE RELATING TO RISK ZONES FOR INTRODUCTION OF BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of S.J. Res. 4, which the clerk will report by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (S.J. Res. 4) providing for congressional disapproval of the rule submitted by the Department of Agriculture under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, relating to risk zones for introduction of bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be up to 3 hours for debate equally divided.

The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Madam President, I rise today in opposition to the resolution and in support of the rule as proposed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. I do this, first of all, with great appreciation of the efforts of my colleagues to bring this resolution forward. But I must encourage my colleagues to vote against this resolution.

This is not the time to pull the plug on a rulemaking process that is rooted in the best available science and, instead, to be guided by the concerns that seem to be less about science than about trade advantages.

The illustrious chairman of the Finance Committee went into great detail about the trade issues and the fact that the rule change is based on sound science. That is a lot of what I want to talk about initially this morning.

First, I think we need to understand exactly what the resolution seeks to disapprove of today. On January 4, 2005, the U.S. Department of Agriculture published its final rule regarding further reopening of the U.S. border for beef imports from Canada. This rule designates Canada as the first "minimal-risk region" for bovine spongiform encephalopathy, otherwise known as BSE. I will not try that long word again. We are going to call it BSE. It is due to become effective on this Monday, March 7, 2005. The original rule would have allowed bone-in beef from cattle of any age and live cattle under 30 months of age.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture conducted two rounds of public comment and received over 3,300 comments on the proposed rule. Over a period of months, USDA considered these comments, and responses were published with the final rule. The final rule establishes criteria for geographic regions to be recognized as presenting minimal risk of introducing BSE into the United States.

USDA utilized the OIE, which is the International Office of Epizootics, the international body that deals with animal diseases worldwide. Again, this will be referred to as the OIE. The USDA utilized the OIE guidelines, which recommend the use of risk assessment to manage human as well as animal health risks of BSE, as a basis in developing final regulations defining Canada as a minimal-risk country.

The final rule places Canada in the minimal-risk category and defines the requirements that must be met for the import of certain ruminants and ruminant products from Canada. Under the USDA definition, a minimal-risk region can include a region in which animals have been diagnosed with BSE but where sufficient risk mitigation measures are in place to reduce the likelihood of the disease's introduction into the United States.

On January 2, 2005, Canada confirmed its second domestic case of BSE, and a third case 9 days later. The USDA sent a technical team to Canada on January 24, 2005, to investigate Canada's adherence to the ruminant, ruminant feed ban. The results of that investigation were favorable, finding that the Canadian inspection program and overall compliance to the feed ban were good. The technical team's epidemiological report investigating possible links of the positive animals is still pending.

In response to this, on February 9, 2005, Secretary Johanns announced USDA would delay the implementation of that part of the rule allowing for older bone-in beef—that is beef in excess of 30 months old—because the technical team's investigation in Canada would not be complete by March 7.